

Hey, Jealousy by thedisgruntledone

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Summary:

It takes Eleven a while to realize that Will doesn't like her

Hey, Jealousy

Author's Note:

I'm not entirely pleased with this, but this show has eaten my brain. Oops?

After everything has calmed down and she's allowed to really be out in the world (less than a year but longer than she'd liked), Eleven finds herself gravitating to Will more than any of the others. She really likes the others and really, really likes Mike, but Will has been there. To the Upside Down. He knows what it's like. She wants to be around someone who knows, who can understand without her having to explain why she sometimes comes unglued from things. Someone who knows what it's like to feel like a part of themselves is still there, still in that awful place. Plus the way that Mike and the others talked about him made him seem really nice.

He is really nice, which is why it takes Eleven a while to realize that he doesn't like her at all. He's never rude or mean to her, but he never really talks to her either, and whenever she comes over to Mike's he always makes some excuse to leave shortly after.

She doesn't get it. Doesn't know who to ask, either. She's been accepted into the party completely, but she isn't sure that Dustin and Lucas have even noticed, and she doesn't want to draw their attention to it. She hasn't been told as much but she knows that to point out Will's behavior would be breaking the friend code as surely as telling a lie. Mike notices, she thinks, because Mike notices everything about Will, but something keeps her from talking about it. Mike is really protective of Will, and he might get mad at her if she says anything.

"He's jealous," Max says matter-of-factly when Eleven finally, hesitantly brings it up to her. They're outside the school; Max is trying to teach her to skate and it's not going very well. She has scabbed knees and elbows to prove how well it isn't going, but Eleven is determined to figure it out and Max doesn't mind showing her.

"Jealous?" she asks, tilting her head and barely managing to jump off of the skateboard before it slides out from under her, slippery as an

eel. She glares, then makes sure no one is looking before calling the board back to her with her mind. She's doing better at it now; her nose almost never bleeds anymore. But she knows that she has to make sure that she doesn't show off too much; Hawkins Lab might have been shut down but she can never be sure that someone like them won't come for her eventually. It's okay for Max to see, though.

"So cool," Max says approvingly, grinning. "And yeah, jealous. It's like, when you see someone with something you want and it makes you angry."

"Oh," Eleven says, remembering Mike helping Max up and the hot anger that had sparked through her. She feels her face heat up; no one had ever figured out that she'd been there that day, and she'll never tell. She feels bad about it now; Max is pretty great and she takes all of Eleven's weird stuff in stride, better than anyone else except Mike. And she never makes her feel stupid when she's explaining stuff to her, which even Mike sometimes does. Eleven wishes that she hadn't been such a jerk to her in the beginning. "But why?"

Max shrugs. She sits down on the curb and Eleven follows suit, the two of them watching some of the other kids for a moment before Max speaks. "He wasn't gone for very long, but I guess he feels like you took his spot, a little bit. The guys talked about you a lot. Well, not with me because I didn't know anything, but with each other. Mike missed you the most, but they all did. It made me kind of jealous at first, too, because Mike wouldn't even give me a chance because I wasn't you. But who could blame them? You're pretty awesome." She nudges Eleven with her shoulder and Eleven smiles. "He'll get over it."

He doesn't get over it. Hopper and Joyce start dating, which means that Eleven and Will are thrown together more and more often, and it's even more obvious that he doesn't want to be around her when the rest of the group isn't acting as a buffer. He smiles and makes nice when Joyce and Hopper are around, but as soon as they leave he goes into his room and doesn't come out. Jonathan gives her awkward, apologetic looks and tries to make up for Will by being extra nice, but Eleven wishes he wouldn't. It just makes it even more obvious that Will is acting weird.

Life goes on. Eleven eventually gives up on trying to be Will's friend, and if the others notice the way that they act around each other they don't say anything. They play games and they help Eleven get used to school (she is Jane, now, and that's what she's known as at school, but all of her friends still call her Eleven. That's okay; it's how she thinks of herself, too, most of the time). Max, the smartest of the lot, helps her on the homework she doesn't get, and Jonathan or Nancy are nice enough to tutor her when she's over at one of their houses. She's never been dumb and she was taught at the lab, so she catches on quickly. She's glad that the adults arranged it so that she could be in the same year as her friends; she doesn't know what she would have done if she were going to be without them.

Then Joyce and Hopper decide that they want to try living together. Eleven is really happy. She loves Joyce and Jonathan a lot, and she likes that Joyce makes Hopper happy. She figures that she can just ignore Will not liking her. She's had practice.

It's hardest when Mike is around. He's maybe the happiest about Joyce and Hopper out of all of them, because it puts his two favorite people in the same place and he no longer has to split his time between them. He's around a lot, and they watch movies and play video games, and if Will is quiet and withdrawn Mike doesn't seem to notice.

One evening he's getting ready to leave and he tugs Eleven outside with him. They've held hands a couple of times but not much else, and when he kisses her she kisses back with enthusiasm. She'd thought that maybe he didn't like her anymore. That he didn't think she was pretty. It's nice to be kissing him; it makes her stomach flutter and her face hot, but she likes it.

After a little while he pulls back and grins at her, face flushed. "Night," he says softly, then backs toward his bike, looking at her until he has to turn away. She watches him leave, waving at him when he turns back to look at her. She's smiling when she turns to go inside, but then she sees Will. He's at the window watching Mike leave, too, and his face looks angry and sad all at the same time, and she realizes that Max was right.

He sees her watching him and his face changes, becomes scared, and

he's out of the window. Eleven goes inside, thinking hard. She doesn't want Will to be jealous of her; doesn't know how to articulate what she knows to be true: that no matter what happens, Will will always be Mike's best friend. Words aren't really her thing; even now she prefers not to talk too much. She wonders if there is a way to tell him that doesn't involve embarrassing them both with words.

She falls thinking about how to go about it, and is woken some time later by noises coming out of Will's room. It sounds like he's having a nightmare. Without thinking about it she gets up and goes in, shaking him awake. He thrashes against her when she tries to shake him, knocking her backwards, and she doesn't mean to but her mind strikes back instinctively, the anger that she tries so hard to keep in check flaring out. He's thrown off of the bed and hits the floor with a loud thumping noise, and Eleven runs over to him, worried. Hopper keeps telling her that she needs to control her anger before she hurts someone, and she wonders if she's finally done it.

Will is awake and rubbing his arm. There are tears on his cheeks and his breathing is shaky. "Thanks," he says, voice soft.

"I'm sorry," Eleven replies, and she means more than his arm.

He looks up at her and shakes his head. "It's fine," he says. "I'm glad you woke me up before mom heard." His eyes drift down. He's embarrassed, she knows, but isn't really sure why. Nightmares are normal. Joyce has told her this, so have Hopper and Mike.

Eleven debates for a moment, biting at her lip, then sits down, careful not to touch. "I have them, too," she says. "Not as much as before, but sometimes."

Will glances at her again. "The Upside Down?" he asks, and Eleven nods. It's not a place you forget, and not only had Will been there, a piece of it had been inside of him. She looks down at her hands.

"I'm sorry," Will says, and she looks up. "I've been a jerk."

"Yes," she says, and Will laughs.

"Honest."

"Friends don't lie," she tells him, and at that, Will looks at her. He's still smiling a bit.

"No," he says, "they don't." He holds out a hand. "I really am sorry," he says. "Friends?"

Eleven smiles back and takes his hand.